

Floor Statement- Motion to Recommit

July 12, 2012

Rep. Louise M. Slaughter

M. Speaker,

We've just concluded debate on a bill that will make it easier for the mining industry to profit from digging up valuable minerals on land owned by the American taxpayer. And what would the American people get in return? Nothing except poorer public health, a dirtier environment, and fewer opportunities for hunting, fishing and recreation.

Instead of the bill we are considering today, we should be amending the statute that was signed into law by Ulysses S. Grant in 1872. In an effort to spur development of the West, the law gave almost unlimited power to mining companies. 140 years later, this law has outlived its usefulness, yet over the 25 years I've been in Congress, every attempt to repeal this law has failed. Now today, we compound the problem by voting on legislation that will give even more power to mining interests.

Adding insult to injury, the companies benefitting from this bill can continue to take minerals owned by American taxpayers -- royalty-free -- even if they're foreign companies, and even if they have cheated on their taxes.

There is still time to fix three of the most glaring loopholes contained in this bill, and my amendment does just that. The amendment will not kill the bill, and we will immediately move forward with a final vote on its passage.

However, if adopted, my amendment will insert safeguards into the final legislation that will protect our national security and protect American jobs.

First, my amendment prevents mining contracts from being awarded to companies that have failed to pay their taxes. Last week, the Las Vegas Sun reported that mining companies in Nevada have underpaid their taxes by \$8.7 million since 2008. At a time when cities and towns across America are going bankrupt, and some in Congress threaten to cut Medicare and other vital programs in the name of fiscal responsibility, we must hold corporations accountable for the taxes they owe to the American people. If mining companies are to profit from our natural resources, they must be required to pay their fair share.

Second, my amendment ensures that neither Iran nor China is allowed to profit from today's bill. Under my amendment, mineral resources deemed critical or strategic will be prohibited from export to Iran or China. No company that is owned by Iran or China will be allowed to mine American minerals, and under no circumstances will American minerals be exported to either of these nations.

In an age when Iran is threatening the security of our ally Israel, and the stability of the entire Middle East, this Congress must ensure that not a single American resource goes to supporting the dangerous Iranian regime. My amendment would leave no doubt that the United States stands by our allies and that not an ounce of American minerals ends up in Iranian hands.

Furthermore, as my constituents know all too well, China routinely engages in unfair and anti-competitive behavior that has stolen American jobs and weakened our middle class. It is time that this Congress, and this country, stops the decades-long giveaway to China.

I am the author of the Reciprocal Market Access Act, a bipartisan bill that would finally put an end to the wholesale exporting of American manufacturing jobs to China, and my amendment today echoes this plan. With passage of my amendment today, we would make sure that the door is closed when China comes knocking to profit from our precious natural resources.

Finally, my amendment protects American jobs by prohibiting outsourcing, and requiring mining companies to use mining equipment that is made in the United States.

The sweat and blood of middle class Americans built the United States, and it is time that this Congress put their interests first. With my amendment today, we can do just that, by putting in place safeguards that protect American jobs and ensure that mining equipment is made in the USA.

I am introducing my amendment on behalf of the people of Rochester NY- they are some of the greatest workers that the world has ever known. My constituents are among the 300 million rightful owners of our nation's natural resources, and I know that not a single one of them wants this Congress to simply give away our valuable assets to China, or outsource precious American jobs.

Over the last two years, the Majority has consistently pandered to corporate interests. The Majority has voted more than 100 times to benefit the oil industry, and even voted last year to give away federal land to a single foreign mining company that has ties to Iran's nuclear program.

The Majority has also answered the wishes of the health insurance industry, including voting more than 30 times to dismantle historic healthcare reforms. They've continued this corporate care-giving right up until today as we prepare to vote on a bill that is a giveaway to corporate mining interests.

What we should be doing is voting on a jobs bill that helps people, not fattens corporate profits. But if the Majority insists on moving forward with flawed bills, we can at least close loopholes in order to protect the American people. By fixing three vital flaws within today's bill, my amendment will allow each of us to vote for our constituents and stand up for the middle class.

Again, my amendment will not kill the bill. If my amendment is adopted, the bill as amended will immediately be voted upon. I urge my colleagues to support my amendment, and stand with me as I fight to protect our natural resources and American-made jobs.

I YIELD back the balance of my time.